

# State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



## PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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### Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, JD, MSW Associate Legislative Analyst The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee Tuesday, March 1, 2005

#### In Support of: **HB6761, An Act Concerning Pensions for Municipal Paraprofessionals and Noncertified School Personnel**

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Rep. Ryan and members of the Committee. My name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Associate Legislative Analyst for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of HB 6761, which would provide pensions to school paraprofessionals.

Job segregation is problematic for women and their families as the jobs traditionally held by females often pay less than those occupations dominated by men and tend not to offer pension plans. According to a study conducted by the Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement, jobs held predominately by women were paid between 17-20% less than those comparable jobs held predominately by men.<sup>1</sup> According to the Social

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wiser.heinz.org/yfp\\_pay\\_equity\\_facts.html](http://www.wiser.heinz.org/yfp_pay_equity_facts.html).

Security Administration, only 56% of women who worked full-time participated in a pension or savings plan.<sup>2</sup>

The paraprofessional field is a prime example of a female-dominated occupation that is inequitable in both pay and pensions. Paraprofessionals, who often assist teachers with special needs children, earn the same as janitors in the same school system, and \$2,500 less than landscaping and groundskeeping workers.<sup>3</sup>

It is not likely that paraprofessionals will save for retirement with their current earnings. Allowing paraprofessionals and noncertified school personnel to participate in pension plans will address the continuing inequalities women face in the workforce and in retirement.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup>Women's Institute for A Secure Retirement (Wiser), *Your Future Paycheck*, May 2002, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Average wages of: Teacher's Assistants \$24,118; Janitors \$24,122, and; Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers \$26,638. *CT Occupational Employment Wages, Statewide*. CT Department of Labor, November 18, 2004, available at [www.ct.dol.state.ct.us](http://www.ct.dol.state.ct.us).

